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ABSTRACT

The Alabama state plan for the education of homeless children and youth is submitted in response to requirements of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987. The plan consists of an introduction, three main sections, and a timetable for the accomplishment of State objectives. The introduction summarizes the homeless education initiatives of the McKinney Act and describes the creation of the Alabama Office of Homeless Children and Youth. The first section, "Goal of the State Plan," proposes Alabama's aim to assure equal educational access for homeless children and youth. The second section, "Responsibilities of the State Office of Homeless Children and Youth," presents the following mandates: (1) to review residency requirements pertaining to the education of homeless students; (2) to gather data on the number of homeless children and youth; (3) to establish procedures assuring uniform data collection; (4) to supply technical assistance to local education agencies; (5) to evaluate the State plan; and (6) to prepare a report concerning program status. The third section, "Responsibilities of Local Education Agencies," states the following goals: (1) to identify homeless children and youth; (2) to collect data; and (3) to provide services and educational planning. The timetable outlines supporting activities and completion dates for State objectives. (AF)

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ALABAMA PLAN

FOR THE

EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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INTRODUCTION

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (the Act), signed into law on July 22, 1987, provides comprehensive federal emergency and long-term assistance for homeless persons. Title VII, Subtitle B of the Act, Education of Homeless Children and Youth, establishes the provisions to assure that homeless children and youth have access to a free, appropriate public education that would be provided to children of the residents of the State and is consistent with State school attendance laws. It further provides that residency requirements as a component of compulsory school attendance laws be reviewed and steps undertaken to assure these laws do not prohibit children and youth from school attendance.

In response to the Act, the Alabama Department of Education applied for, and was awarded, grant funds to establish the Office of Homeless Children and Youth and to carry out provisions of the Act. To meet the requirements of the award, the Office of Homeless Children and Youth of the Department of Education submits the Alabama Plan for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth to provide information and assistance to local administrative units with the identification, location, and the collection of data related to homeless children and youth in the state.

ALABAMA PLAN
FOR THE EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

I. GOAL OF THE STATE PLAN

The goal of the State Plan for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth in Alabama, hereinafter referred to as the Plan, is to provide the framework to assure that equal educational access shall be given to homeless children and youth in Alabama.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STATE OFFICE OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The responsibilities attributed to the Office of Homeless Children and Youth are as follows:

A. To review and make recommendations for revisions of residency requirements which may be a part of Alabama's public education laws prohibiting educational access to homeless children and youth by:

1. Reviewing state statutes regarding compulsory school attendance and residency requirements; and

2. Providing recommendations for the revision of such laws which prohibit educational access to homeless children and youth.

B. To gather data on the number and location of homeless children and youth as requested by the U. S. Department of Education. Data should be:

1. Inclusive of elements such as the nature and extent of problems of access to, and placement of, homeless children and youth in the public schools and difficulties identifying the special needs of such children and youth;

2. Systematically collected; and

3. Accurate.

C. To establish procedures to assure data are collected in a uniform manner. For instance, the state may establish a system to eliminate possible duplication of counts and a means to verify information.

D. To provide technical assistance to local education agencies as requested and needed.

E. To evaluate the Plan.

1. Review data to determine the status of identifying the homeless children and youth in the state.

2. Review data to determine the status of the problems associated with the educational access for homeless children and youth.

F. To prepare a report concerning program status.

1. Prepare and submit an annual report to the U. S. Department of Education.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES

The responsibilities attributed to each local education agency (LEA) are as follows:

A. To identify homeless children and youth.

LEAs should develop a procedure to identify homeless children and youth based on the definition as follows:

Homeless children and youth are those who:

1. Lack a fixed, regular and adequate residence; or

2. Have a primary nighttime residence that is:

a. a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);

b. an institution providing temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or

c. a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

(Section 103(a)(1)(2) of the Act)

B. To collect data.

LEAs should collect data as requesed by the State Office of Homeless Children and Youth. The data will be inclusive of elements such as the nature and extent of problems of access to public schools, educational programs and services, and difficulties identifying the special needs of homeless children and youth. In collecting these data, the LEAs should utilize local agencies and civic and community organizations that are most likely to have knowledge of homeless children and youth.

C. To provide services and educational planning.

Services provided to homeless children and youth should be comparable to those offered to other students in the school, including educational services for which the child or youth meets the eligibility criteria. Educational services include, but are not limited to, programs for the disadvantaged, programs for the handicapped, programs for students with limited English proficiency, programs in vocational education, programs for the academically gifted, and school meal programs.

A team should be formed, which may be inclusive of the principal or his/her designee, grade appropriate teachers, counselors, social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, and other appropriate staff members (e.g., special education teachers, middle and high school vocational education teachers, etc.). Parents, guardians, and students should be given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process regarding education planning and, also where appropriate, the school system should utilize officials affiliated with local community agencies.

The LEA will determine the team's composition and also determine whether it will be a systemwide team or a school-based team. This team should determine the needs of each individual homeless child and youth and recommend services and educational programs appropriate to meet the identified needs.

D. To maintain school records.

The personal records of homeless children and youth will be maintained in the same manner as those of other students. Records will be maintained in a manner consistent with section 438, Protection of the Rights and Privacy of Parents and Students, of the General Education Provisions Act. Records should be transferred in a timely manner to a new school if a homeless child or youth moves to another location.

E. To provide an appeals process.

Homeless children and youth are entitled to the same rights and protections, including due process, afforded to other children and youth. Parents and guardians of homeless children and youth who are dissatisfied with the decision regarding school assignment are entitled to appeal the decision to the local board of education.

TIMETABLE

OBJECTIVES	SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES	COMPLETION DATE
STATE RESPONSIBILITIES		
1. Review and make recommendations for the the revision of residency requirements which may be a part of Alabama's public education laws that may prohibit educational access to homeless children and youth.	1.1 Review state statutes regarding compulsory school attendance and residency requirements.	June-July 1989
	1.2 Provide recommendations to the Department of Education for the revision of such laws which may prohibit educational access to homeless children and youth.	June-July 1989
2. Gather data on the number and location of homeless children and youth as requested by the U. S. Department of Education and the Alabama State Board of Education. Data gathered will be inclusive of elements such as the nature and extent of problems of access to, and placement of, homeless children and youth in the public schools and difficulties identifying the special needs of such children.	2.1 Develop a process to systematically and accurately collect data.	September 1989
	2.2 Gather data from local administrative units, officials of public and private shelters, and other social services agencies.	Ongoing
	2.3 Compile data.	Ongoing
3. Monitor data collection of local administrative units.	3.1 Review data collected.	Ongoing
	3.2 Provide feedback.	Ongoing
4. Provide technical assistance to local administrative units.	4.1 Conduct onsite visits.	As requested
5. Evaluate the Plan.	5.1 Review data collected to determine the increase or decrease in the number of homeless children and youth identified and enrolled in public schools.	Ongoing

TIMETABLE

OBJECTIVES	SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES	COMPLETION DATE
	5.2 Review data collected to determine the status of the problems associated with educational access of homeless children and youth.	Ongoing
6. Provide report on the status of the program.	6.1 Prepare and submit an annual report to the U. S. Department of Education.	December 1989